



Chartering Aircraft to Alaska's Backcountry

The engine coughs and sputters to life as you sit in a small plane awaiting clearance to taxi. The adventure you seek still hours away as you gaze out the window, yet flying in Alaska is a unique adventure in itself. Often it is the only way to reach backcountry areas that offer superb wilderness recreation opportunities. You can reduce costs by taking a scheduled commercial or mail flight to the community nearest your destination and chartering an aircraft from there. Aircraft may also be chartered, which is more convenient but usually more expensive because of the longer distances involved. There are many companies providing scheduled and charter service; check under "airlines" in the yellow pages of the telephone directory, which may be available in your local library.

Who Should I Fly With?

Air charter operators must have a permit to operate within National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges and some other public recreation lands in Alaska. You should check in advance with the land managing agency for the area that you plan to visit. National Parks and some National Wildlife

Refuges provide lists of commercial permit holders which may be obtained from the individual agency offices or from the Alaska Public Lands Information Center. For names of air charter operators in other areas of Alaska, check local telephone directories, visitors bureaus, community visitor guides, or the official State Vacation Planner, available free from the Alaska Division of Tourism, PO Box 110801, Juneau, AK 99811-0801, (phone 907-465-2010, fax 465-2287).

What Type of Aircraft Do I Need?

The type of aircraft depends on a number of factors, including the number and weight of people in your party, the amount of gear, the length and condition of the landing area, weather conditions, and the aircraft available that day. A Cessna 185 can carry 2-3 passengers and their gear, depending on the above factors. A Cessna 206-207 carries 3-5 people and gear. A PA-18 (Cub or Super Cub) carries only one passenger but is best suited to short, rough landing areas. Pilots insist on lighter loads when operating out of shorter, rougher landing areas,



A Grumman Goose transporting people on the Aleutian Islands



World War II brought an increase of water landing aircraft to Alaska

so your party may require more flights for the pick-up than the drop-off. For your own safety do not pressure the pilot into taking more weight than the aircraft can safely handle for existing conditions.

How Much Will the Charter Cost?

Check with the operator for an estimate. For an approximate cost, measure the length of the trip in statute miles, check the

appropriate airspeed on the next page and multiply the flying time by the hourly rate. Charter costs always include the pilot's round trip, so double the one-way cost. Poor weather or wind can increase flying time. If your plane picks up another group after dropping you off, you may not need to pay for that portion of the flight, depending on the initial arrangements. Some operators have a fixed rate to more popular destinations. You should have a clear understanding of how costs will be figured before leaving.

AIR CHARTER SERVICE INFORMATION

What About the Pick-up?

Make certain there are no misunderstandings about where and when you should be picked up. If you miss a pick-up it could cost more for the operator's time spent looking for you. The pilot should be familiar with the landing area and certain that the plane can land there. Discuss alternatives with the pilot in case the landing area becomes temporarily unusable.

What If There's Bad Weather?

Bad weather is often a problem in Alaska, especially in coastal and mountainous areas. Your trip



Float planes can transport you to Public Use Cabins in Kenai Fjords National Park

plans should allow for a one- or two-day delay on each end of the trip due to weather. Longer delays are certainly possible, so plan accordingly and take extra food. Remember, the weather could be fine at your pick-up point but unflyable where the plane is based.

Can Small Aircraft Carry Canoes?

Some larger aircraft, such as a DeHavilland Beaver, can accommodate a canoe and passengers together. Smaller aircraft may carry canoes, but only when there are no passengers on board, and an external load permit is required by the Federal Aviation Administration. Consequently you would have to pay for two round-trips — one for yourself and one for your canoe. Canoes normally must be chartered in a larger city or town, since the cost

of air freighting them to bush communities is extremely high. For these reasons, canoes are generally not practical in remote parts of Alaska. Collapsible craft, such as folding canoes or kayaks, inflatable kayaks or rafts, and some smaller hard-shell kayaks, readily fit into Cessna 185 and larger aircraft and are preferred. Plan on bringing your craft with you, as there are few businesses that rent collapsible craft at this time.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are carrying any red pepper-based (capsicum) aerosol sprays for bear protection be sure to notify the pilot. For safety reasons, he or she may have special procedures for handling these substances.

For more information on visiting Alaska check our website:

<http://www.nps.gov/aplic>

Or visit us at:

605 W. 4th Ave. Ste 105
Anchorage, AK 99501

Additional materials are available for purchase through:

Alaska Natural History Association

750 W. 2d Ave., Ste. 100
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 274-8440

<http://www.alaskanha.org>

AIR CHARTER SERVICE INFORMATION

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Approximate rates*</u>	<u>Approximate airspeed</u>	<u>Passengers</u>
C-185, wheels	\$230 - \$275/hour	130 mph	2-3
C-185, floats	\$250 - \$290/hour	125 mph	2-3
C-206 or 207, wheels	\$225 - \$275/hour	130 mph	4
C-206, floats	\$250 - \$290/hour	120 mph	4
PA-18 (Cub), wheels	\$135 - \$150/hour	95 mph	1
PA-18 (Cub), floats	\$140 - \$160/hour	90 mph	1
Helio-Courier	\$250 - \$290/hour	140 mph	3
DeHavilland Beaver	\$360 - \$415/hour	135 mph	5

* These are approximate rates for 1998 based on quotes from six air taxi services. The higher rates reflect charter service from more remote communities, which are generally closer to your destination.

605 W. 4th Avenue* Anchorage Alaska * (907) 271-2737 * <http://www.nps.gov/aplic>